



## FORM OF GOVERNMENT REPORT

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**TO:** Mayor Scott Higgins and Camas City Council  
**FROM:** Form of Government Advisory Committee  
**DATE:** April 24, 2018

### **SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION:**

The Form of Government Advisory Committee (Committee) unanimously recommends that the City Council place two measures on the ballot. The measures are (1) adopt the Council-Manager form of city government; and (2) have the Mayor position elected at large, city-wide.

### **WHEN AND WHY FORMED:**

In February 2018, Mayor Scott Higgins established the Form of Government Advisory Committee, in response to a request by City Councilor Greg Anderson, to review the City of Camas' current form of government and to explore alternative forms. Our assignment was to look at government structures and determine which would best suit Camas in the future, while currently not in any leadership crisis.

### **TYPES OF CODE CITIES:**

#### **Mayor – Council Form of Government (RCW 35A.12)**

- Elected Mayor seven elected Council Members
- Mayor is chief executive and administrative officer of the city

#### **Council – Manager Form of Government (RCW 35A.13)**

- Seven elected Council Members
- Council selects Chair of the Council (Mayor), but Council may put a proposition on the ballot to have an elected Mayor
- Mayor presides over Council Meeting – No administrative duties
- Council selects City Manager
- Requires a majority of the Council to remove the City Manager

### **COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP:**

The Committee is made up of the following Camas citizens:

- Two former Camas Mayors - Nan Henriksen and Paul Dennis
- Former City of Camas Administrator - Lloyd Halverson
- Camas School Board President and former Camas Public Works Director - Doug Quinn
- Washington State University Vancouver Vice Chancellor for Finance and Operations and City of Camas Civil Service Commissioner - Lynn Valenter
- President of PointNorth Consulting Inc, a leadership development firm - Lisa Schauer

It may be worth noting that Henriksen, Dennis and Quinn were elected and reelected many times by Camas citizens. In addition, Halverson worked 24 years at the City serving under four different mayors.

Camas City Council Member Greg Anderson participated as a liaison from the City Council. Council Member Anderson provided background and context to the City Council's interest in the topic, as well as insight into the City's vision and strategic plan. Pete Capell, City Administrator, served as staff support for the Committee.

#### **TIMELINE AND PROCESS:**

The full Committee met five times between March 5, and May 7, 2018. The entire Committee was very engaged and also spent many hours of research and work outside of meetings. In order to establish a shared understanding of the different forms of government and to weigh the advantages and disadvantages, the Committee first reviewed the Council Workshop meeting, where Jim Doherty, Municipal Research and Service Center of Washington (MRSC) Legal Consultant, defined the options that exist today in Washington State. The Committee then assembled a list of questions and identified specific research they tasked City staff to explore and report back to the Committee. The Committee also held a conference call with MRSC Executive Director, Tracy Burrows, who answered the member's questions offering both important state-wide data and insight.

With a focus on future, continuing success for the City, the Committee and experts reviewed two forms of local government described in Washington State law and practiced in communities in our state. They are our current "Mayor-Council" form (Revised Code of Washington, RCW 35A.12) and the "Council-Manager" form (RCW 35A.13). The advantages and disadvantages of each form were reviewed, discussed and analyzed quite intensively at several of our meetings. The trends of adoption and abandonment of the two forms were reviewed. Special attention was given to cities with comparable population and cities which share similar characteristics (i.e. dynamic vital economy, well-regarded schools, attractive residential atmosphere and proximity to urban centers).

Under the Council – Manager form, the Mayor presides over Council Meetings and is recognized as the head of the City for intergovernmental and ceremonial purposes, but has no regular administrative duties. The Council is prohibited from interfering with the City Manager's administration. The City Manager, however, is directly accountable to and can be removed by a majority of the Council at any time. The Council – Manager form requires an active, attentive and strong Council because they are responsible to ensure that the City Manager is carrying out their policy direction. That is why this form is also called a Strong Council form of government.

Attached to the Form of Government Committee Report are the following documents that the committee utilized during their process:

- MRSC Presentation to Council
- Comparable Cities Memo
- Financial Analysis Memo
- Transition Memo
- City Attorney Memo
- Summary Views of Professional Management in Local Government by Lloyd Halverson
- RCW 35A.12 Mayor – Council Plan of Government
- RCW 35A.13 Council – Manager Plan of Government

- March 5, 2018 Committee Meeting Notes
- March 19, 2018 Committee Meeting Notes
- April 2, 2018 Committee Meeting Notes
- April 16, 2018 Committee Meeting Notes
- May 7, 2018 Committee Meeting Notes

### **DOMINANT THEMES:**

Throughout our discussions, a recurrent theme surfaced about the quality of leaders (both elected and appointed professionals) being critically important. There is no city government structure that guarantees good governance. Excellent leaders can make any structure work and vice versa, so we have focused on taking current and past individuals out of the positions, looking at the structures themselves and determining which form provides the best chance for good governance into the future.

Another theme the Committee recognized was that it was customary for Camas to be forward thinking and proactive in examining major choices. The economic diversification vision for Camas was developed from a position of strength, not in reaction to current economic crisis. The expansion of the system of parks, trails and open spaces was done with planning to preserve our excellent quality of life in Camas. Similarly, this examination of forms of government was directed by the current City Council and Mayor for the future success of our community.

A third and equally important theme was that current and prospective citizens, industries and businesses interested in expanding or locating within our City, have shown a preference for a city government whose decisions and actions are fair, consistent and predictable for all, and not just for political favorites.

A fourth theme we recognized was ever increasing demands being placed on local governments by state and federal laws, and growth in the number and complexity of local government services. These changing forces have led many local governments to turn to a more professional management model in the past 30 years.

A fifth theme is the firm belief that the Mayor being elected by the voters is maintained. That person would still be the face of the city and ensure community access to elected leadership. The committee felt so strongly that the elected Mayor be maintained, that they wanted it on the ballot at the same time as the proposition to change the form of government (Mayor-Council to Council-Manager). But, state statute requires that after the Council-Manager change has first passed, the choice to keep an elected Mayor must also be voted on. So, this requirement means that each item will be placed on separate ballots. The Committee though, treats them as one issue for the City; the preferred form of government.

### **WHY NOW?**

The City of Camas has a long history of strategic, progressive and visionary leadership. For decades, the City has maintained a commitment to a strong economic development foundation where vibrant employment centers are balanced with well planned residential development and thriving green spaces. In today's turbulent political climate, the Mayor and City Council are interested in safeguarding the success of our special City recognizing the importance of seeing the risk, knowing the risk, and mobilizing a plan to mitigate the risks. While there is no form of government that can protect against all

political threats, the Committee was charged with the task to review the City's current form of government against other potential forms of government. As the City has grown, and continues to grow, not only do City services need to respond and adjust; the City government too must calibrate as needed to ensure reliable and professional oversight.

This is the window of opportunity to implement the change, as the Mayor and at-large position on the Council will be on the ballot in 2019.

It may be noted, that the City of Camas is actually "behind the times" with regards to its form of government, as more Washington cities have moved to the Strong Council form of government. The Committee recognizes that this is due to the fact that the City's leadership has been strong and secure and has remained so. Other cities likely made the change earlier due to turbulent leadership issues.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

After significant research and discussion, the Form of Government Advisory Committee unanimously believes that the Council-Manager form of government will provide the most predictable, stable and prosperous framework for the long-term vision of the City of Camas. We therefore recommend the following action by the Camas City Council:

1. Place on the November 2018 ballot a measure to adopt the Council-Manager form of government (per RCW 35A.06)
2. Since the RCW does not allow placing both the change of government and the direct election of the mayor on the same ballot, we recommend that if the change of government passes in the November 2018 election; in December 2018, the Council place on the February 2019 ballot a measure to make the mayor position elected at large, city-wide (per RCW 35.13.033)
3. The Council appoint a subcommittee to work with the Mayor, City Administrator and City Attorney to begin preparing a transition plan for the conversion of management structure to be ready to put into effect December 2018, if the voters approve the new form of government in November.